

## DCFS Academic Internship Field Placement Opportunities

- A. *The Undergraduate Field Placement—less experienced students:* For students unfamiliar with child welfare, field placements allow students to glean a *general* sense of each field unit and how the field units work together for families.
- B. *Placement for First Year Graduate Students:* Graduate students unfamiliar with child welfare will require basic field experiences. However, the school may hold additional expectations for service and time spent on-site so that progress through basic assignments can be made. Graduate students who come with experience may begin with more complex assignments but still must not violate overall internship prohibitions against performing casework activities or direct contact with clients without supervision or special arrangements with OLPD and field administration.
- C. *Field Placement for Advanced Graduate Students:* Experienced graduate students may choose extended time in direct practice or seek a field instructor who holds management responsibilities regarding program development, quality assurance, legal/investigative, clinical administration, research analysis or management, etc. Field Instructors and Field Placement Liaisons should keep DCFS administrators fully informed when assigning advanced students more advanced tasks.

### **Different specialty areas in which students can be placed:**

- **Division of Child Protection: Investigations**—Students have expressed a primary interest in how initial DCFS intervention works. Students want to observe and participate in:
  - Strategies to determine whether allegations of child abuse or neglect are founded or unfounded, whether children are safe, can be made safe, or require removal from the home.
  - DCFS “Front Door” activities as part of the first-responder team to hotline calls;
  - Evidence-seeking interview techniques, standards for evidence, safety planning, and case decision-making with or without court involvement.
  - A variety of clinical, cultural and legal dynamics.Most want to learn the practice of “*Psychological First Aid*” to diminish trauma from intervention, and to learn about behavioral and developmental consequences of childhood trauma within families.
- **Placement/Permanency Units**—Students seeking Placement/Permanency Units are interested in learning about foster care casework after children have been removed from biological parents. Students have expressed interest in some of the following:
  - techniques for coordination of care across multiple systems,
  - activities designed to keep family members connected (visitation),
  - expectations of the court for ongoing safety,
  - permanency and well-being, discussions of child/family dynamics, critical decision-making, etc.Generally interns seeking these units understand they can help coordinate parents, foster parents, peers, siblings, resource providers, schools, health and mental health care, juvenile courts and miscellaneous community programs around the well-being of the child and reunification of the family. Some specifically want to learn how case management addresses concurrent planning for adoption preparation or for youth in transition to independence.
- **High Risk Intact Family Services**—Students seeking an internship with intact services have expressed a primary interest in family preservation and the multi-faceted perspective of family-centered engagement used with in-home practice. Student interaction is expected with local human service resources, client advocates, and the family. Interns benefit from observing multiple strategies to build positive engagement toward family stability and child well-being. Students have expressed interest in seeing how staff carry out their DCFS mission, with little or no court involvement, to keep families together.
- **DCFS Licensing Unit**—Students seeking an internship with either Foster Care Licensing or Day Care Licensing have expressed a primary interest in foster family recruitment or licensing prospective foster homes, day care homes, or day care centers.
- **Division of Clinical Practice**—Graduate Students who already have at least a Bachelor’s Degree who desire an internship in Clinical would be interested more in administrative work under the supervision of a DCFS Clinical

Coordinator with only limited direct interaction with youth in care, their families, and foster parents. This may include some travel. DCFS Clinical consultations or staffings provide support to caseworkers in planning and obtaining clinical services for their clients who are beyond the ability of the existing service array. Students have expressed interest in some of the following:

- observing and participating in clinical staffings and consultations
- taking the lead in clinical staffings and consultations when assessed as ready
- gathering historical information on a youth within the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) and various other data warehouses
- developing professional writing skills
- collaborating with diverse professionals within DCFS, Private Agencies, Counseling agencies, Psychiatric Hospital Staff, etc.

- **Educational Programs for Youth in Care: Post-Secondary Education**—Students seeking an internship with the DCFS Post-Secondary Education Program (under the Office of Education and Transition Services) are interested in partnering with those who serve current and former foster youth who are enrolled in college, university and vocational training programs. Some driving is required. Students are interested in:
  - Providing administrative support, technical assistance, and educational counseling to prospective students and to caseworkers to support the post-secondary education success of youth
  - Working with DCFS and private agency staff, caregivers, school/college personnel, and others to facilitate the provision of post-secondary education supports and services to youth.
  - Supporting the administration of state and federal funds
  - Providing one on one student support
  - On-campus networking and problem-solving
  - Online survey of ETV coordinators in the U.S. to identify best practices
  - Data gathering and monitoring
- **Advanced Placement**—Students in second year masters or doctorate programs may seek to gain additional understanding of direct service or may work with the school placement liaison and the DCFS Academic Internships Program Manager to establish an additional organizational or program management component for their field experience.
- **Research Options**—Many students seek participation in some sort of child welfare research. Interns may have access to aggregated data that does not include identifying information on clients. Field Instructors are expected to help guide students with research assignments and assist with meeting requirements of the DCFS Institutional Review Board when necessary (for guidance *see Field Instructor Appendix C—Procedure 432 online*).
- **Other**—Individualized internship placements can be negotiated for students based on their unique needs, the requirements of the university, and the availability and willingness of identified DCFS supervisors. For example, the DCFS Academic Internships Program arranges placement for students majoring in communications/public relations, human resources, public administration, accounting, finance, informational technology, and some medical or legal professions to serve in divisions that match their course of study.